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THE VOICE FROM THE SOIL

AN ARTICLE SKETCHING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE SPIRIT AMONG WESTERN CANADIAN FARMERS AND FORECASTING ITS EFFECT ON LEGISLATION

BY GEORGE FISHER CHIPMAN

"It was in 1901 that the spirit of organisation first manifested itself under the banner of the Grain Growers' Association, and gradually but surely this organisation has become stronger, more alert and more widespread, until to-day it has become a mighty force in the land, admired by its friends and dreaded by its enemies."

THIS is the brief but significant story of the organised farmers' movement in the three prairie Provinces of Canada as told by Honourable W. R. Motherwell, Minister of Agriculture in the Saskatchewan Government. He knows whereof he speaks, for he was the prime mover in starting the organisation.

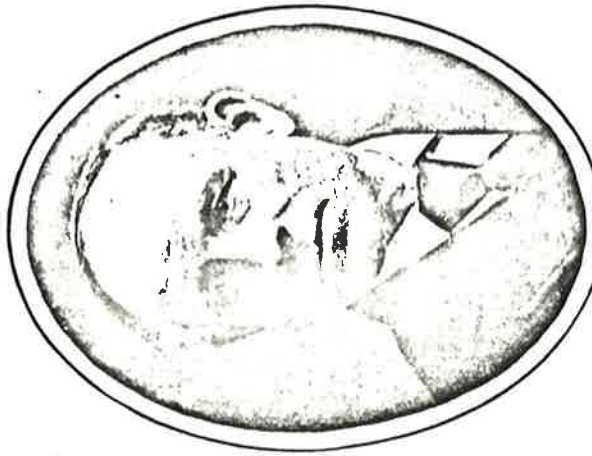
All over Canada the story of the work of the western farmers is being talked of. The eastern newspapers comment upon their action, some favourably, some in terms of condemnation. Suffice it to say, that those papers are a long way from the mark. The papers in the West are very deferential to the organised farmers. Well they may be, for to-day the organised farmers are fully seized of the importance of the part they are playing in the development of the country, having come to a full knowledge of the fact that they are the real foundation of Canadian great-

ness. With this realisation has come a determination to secure benefits adequate to the work done, and to terminate the rule of predatory wealth.

To-day there are farmers plugging steadily along in their fields doing



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faithfully their duty as husbandmen, who at the call of duty can take the platform and deliver addresses or conduct meetings of vast import equally as well as our legislators in the halls of Parliament. It is study and training that has done this. The patched overalls are regarded with respect, and the farmers see the value of standing shoulder to shoulder. Down in the United States President Taft thought it worth his while to address the greatest farmers' convention of the world. Out West the politicians and public men are eager for the opportunity to address a gathering of farmers.

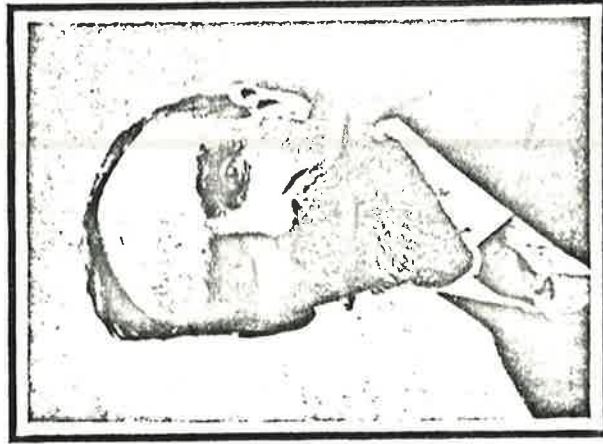
What does the agitation among the western farmers mean? Is it simply a growing pain that will shortly pass away? By no means. There is a tremendous revolution now in progress. The trouble is not merely that of securing elevators owned by the Government. It is deep-seated and involves the remoulding of the economic structure of the nation. At last the farmers have revolted against the rule of special privileges and the

armies of the producer are storming the citadels of the enemy. Where will it end?

The end will come only when the business of the farmer is placed upon the same footing as that of other classes. It will end only when the farmer gets a fair price for what he produces and pays a fair price for what he consumes.

Almost every other industry is organised. Various attempts have been made to organise agriculture in Canada, but they have more or less failed. Now the foundation has been truly laid, and the struggle has become animated. To-day there are approximately 28,000 farmers arrayed under the banner of "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none." The leaders are chosen and the campaign is on.

Let us look at the beginning. In the early days the farmers came to the West, to the much-heralded land of opportunity. On the prairies they were to be free and the land was to be occupied by men who would pro-



MR. D. W. MCFARLANE,
PRESIDENT, THE MANITOBA GRAIN GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

the farmer should be allowed the privilege of shipping grain in car lots if he preferred that system to using the elevator. The railways and the elevators smiled at this new law. "Car distribution" was something that they felt they knew more about than the legislators at Ottawa, and the farmers got no better treatment than before.

About the time that this was going on, W. R. Motherwell, the present Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan, was an ordinary farmer fourteen miles north of the town of Indian Head. As he sat on his binder and reaped his wheat, he devoted some time to thought. "I wonder if these things need be?" he asked himself. "Should the farmers of the West exist for the benefit of the railways and elevators, or should the railways and elevators exist for the benefit of the farmers?"

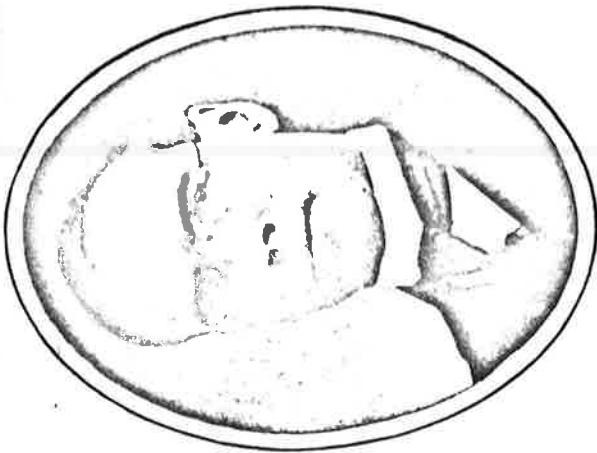
The crisis came in 1901. Peter Dayman, of Abernethy, was another farmer who thought similarly with Mr. Motherwell. Together they decided that the railways and elevators should exist for the benefit of the farmers. Together they drew up a letter and sent it out to various farmers from Indian Head to Qu'Appelle, which resulted in a meeting in Indian Head in 1901, and the beginning of a Grain Growers' Association. The first annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association was held at Indian Head in February, 1902. During the summer of that year Mr. Dayman spent some time in Winnipeg endeavouring to secure justice from the railway. He secured nothing but promises which were not fulfilled. Appeals to other authorities were equally fruitless. The farmers now decided to act for themselves. The railway agent at Sintaluta would not supply the cars in accordance with the Manitoba Grain Act. Mr. Dayman and Mr. Motherwell swore out affidavits against him. The warehouse commissioner, C. C. Castle, took up the case. It was

heard before D. O. Partridge, the magistrate at Sintaluta, and the agent was fined \$50. The railway company appealed, but the Supreme Court at Regina upheld the decision of the magistrate.

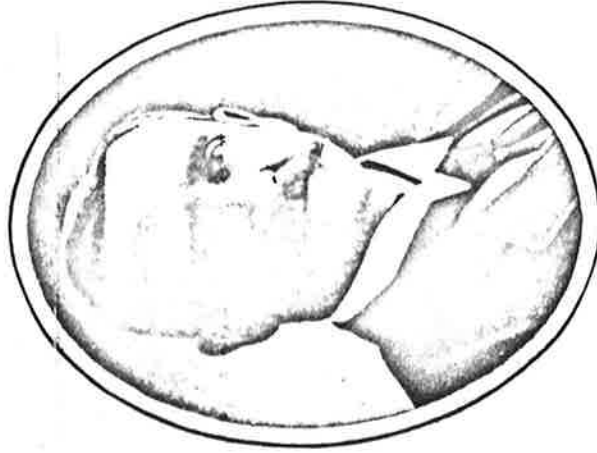
Improvement in western conditions dates from this time, when the farmers began to take the matter into their own hands. Little knots of farmers got together in Saskatchewan and formed Grain Growers' Associations as branches of the central association, of which Mr. Motherwell was the first president. Down in Manitoba, at Virden, another veteran farmer was impelled by similar motives to assist his fellow farmers. This was J. W. Scallion, "Father of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association." He invited Mr. Motherwell to come down to Manitoba a few months after the organisation was started in Saskatchewan. An association was organised at Virden, and its membership reached one hundred and twenty-five the first year, with Mr. Scallion as president. The first meeting of the central Grain Growers' Association of Manitoba was held in Brandon in March, 1903, when Mr. Scallion was elected president.

From this time onward, the history of the Grain Growers' movement has been one of growth, development, and success. In Alberta the cause was taken up by the farmers. In that Province branch associations were organised, as well as a Provincial association. The name was later changed to the Alberta Farmers' Association. There was at the same time in Alberta a branch of the American Society of Equity, which later became a Canadian organisation. Two years ago the associations in Alberta united under the name of the United Farmers of Alberta.

The growth of the farmers' organisations in the West during the past few years has been without parallel, and to-day they stand united all over the prairie land and constitute a power for good that has never been



MR. EDWARD J. FREAM,
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MR. JAMES BOWER,
PRESIDENT,
THE UNITED FARMERS OF ALBERTA

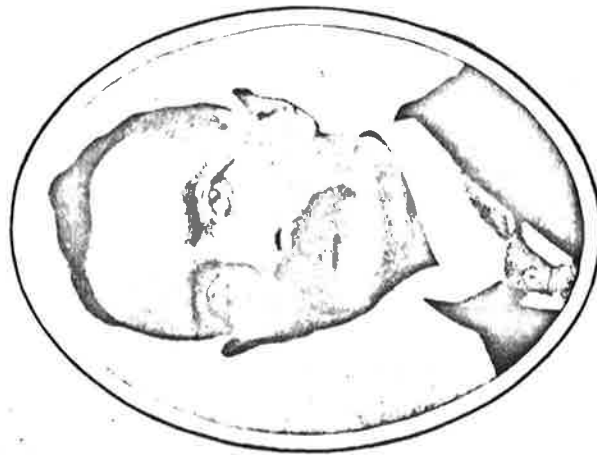
lowest possible. The farmer was told that his wheat was very dirty and heavy dockage was set by the elevator man. Then, in addition, by adjusting weights on the scales a few bushels more could be poured into the treasury of the elevator owners. It was a great system. To prove this there is the testimony of the elevator men and the railway. They both liked it. The farmer did not like it so well. Ground between the two stones, he suffered. He saw that at the rate things were going, the great farming population of the West would shortly exist as a side line to the elevator and railway corporations. While the magnates of these institutions lived well in the cities, the farmer toiled early and late, turning the first furrows on the virgin prairie.

After a decade of this treatment, the worm turned. The Dominion Government sent out a royal commission to investigate conditions. The result was the Manitoba Grain Act, which placed the grain trade of the entire West under Federal supervision and jurisdiction. The new law said that

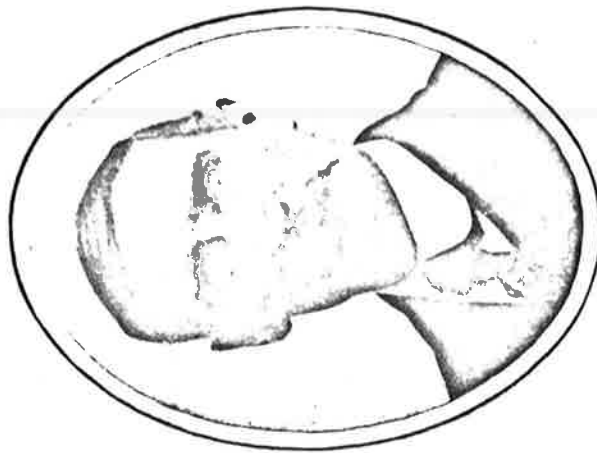
They raised the famous Number One Hard. The railway came, and twenty years ago one railway had a monopoly of the West. Then came the elevators in which to store the grain. These elevators were owned by private parties and were built along the lines of the railway. The railway was out after the money and the same motive prompted the elevator owners. Both wanted the maximum of return from the minimum of effort.

To pull a box car alongside an elevator and dump it full of wheat is a very easy task. The railway liked this system and said to the farmers: "You must put your wheat through the elevators; it makes it so much more convenient for us."

In those days the farmers were few and far between, and when a great railway corporation spoke, they obeyed at once. The elevators also liked this system, because it allowed them to exact from the farmers whatever toll they desired from their wheat. They did exact this toll to the utmost. The price paid by the elevator owner to the farmers was the



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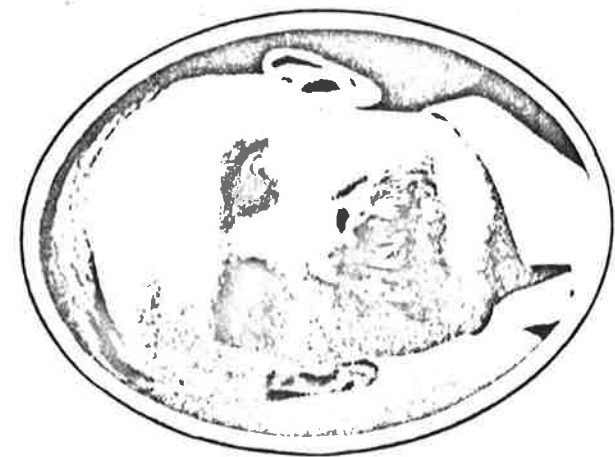


MR. F. W. GREYS,
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equalled in Canada. The farmers of the prairie have awakened to the fact that if conditions are to be altered so that every Canadian will have an equal opportunity, the initiative must be taken by the men who produce the wealth of the nation. They realise that in order to have any influence in the councils of the nation they must have numerical strength and unity. The constitution of the three Provincial farmers' organisations is practically the same, in that they exist chiefly for the purpose of securing legislation fair to all. Organisation work is being carried on at a tremendous rate, and branch associations are springing up all over the land. When the aims of the organisation are laid before the farmers of a community, they at once range themselves beneath the standard under which their brother farmers are now fighting. There are now approximately twenty-eight thousand farmers on the prairie united in the cause, and it is not any stretch of imagination to see that number increased to one hundred thousand within a few years.

When this number is reached, the legislators of the Dominion will more truly represent their constituents than ever they have in the past.

Though the farmers started out on their work as a protest against the unjust exactions of the elevator combine, they have not confined themselves to this one phase of the work. They have attacked monopoly wherever they have found it. They have learned through bitter experience that the farmers of Canada are supporting combines and monopolies in all directions and that the wealth produced by the tillers of the soil is being gathered in by a comparatively small number of men at the heads of great enterprises. Under a protective tariff, they have watched manufacturers create combines, and take from the farmer heavy toll on all that he buys. Under favourable legislation, they have seen the railways go in and possess the land which nature intended for the farmer, and through the banking monopolies they have seen the ready money of the nation turned into the hands of a few. The farmers have



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realised that the land speculator is no friend of theirs, and as the work goes on, they are putting themselves into a position from which they can demand justice from all quarters.

During the past winter the foundations were laid for an organisation of farmers that would stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The farmers of Ontario have joined hands with their brothers on the prairie and have organised a Canadian Council of Agriculture for the purpose of securing legislation in the interest of the nation. By working through a central body they will be able to bring pressure to bear upon the Dominion Parliament and show those legislators on Parliament Hill that their duty does not end when the ballots are cast on election day. They see that if anything is to be accomplished towards making Canada the nation it should be the farmers must be farmers all the time and party politicians never.

Already the farmers can claim many conquests. When they started on their campaign the large interests throughout the country smiled at

them in a patronising way. The big men slapped the farmer on the back and said: "Fine! Farmers' organisations are the greatest thing a country can have." A little later on, when the farmers became powerful and began to do things, these same men cursed them for their obstinacy and, as they called it, "misrepresentations." Legislators began to take notice of the farmer, and the heads of monopolies also began to give them careful consideration. The gentlemen who had passed through the stage of the patronising smile and the indignant curse changed to an attitude of supplication and urged the farmers to be careful in the exercise of their tremendous power. In these days, when a public man of any walk in life addresses a meeting of farmers, he prefaces his remarks with the solemn declaration that "The farmers are the back-bone of the country." This time-honoured expression has become a stale joke on the prairies, and whenever it is perpetrated now it is greeted by "the back-bone of the country," with shouts of laughter.

The Dominion Government has realised the power of the farmers and has amended the Manitoba Grain Act almost to the limit of their demands. The Manitoba Government has come down off the pedestal and enacted legislation for government ownership of elevators in that Province. The Saskatchewan Government is also in a humbled attitude before the farmers, while the Alberta Government is busy enacting legislation in accordance with the demands of the farmers of that Province. The work is not yet done. There are still scores of abuses to be remedied. The farmers want to see the principle of the Initiative, the Referendum, and the Recall established as a part of the constitution of every Canadian legislature. Then they feel they will have an opportunity to see that the legislators who now sit in the halls of parliament will represent the people whose votes elected them.

All the elevator owners were members of that body, and in fact, were the controlling influence there. Owning the eight hundred small elevators on the prairies as well as the terminal elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur, the elevator and milling interests had the farmers at their mercy. Of course, the law said that the farmers should be given cars by the railways in which to ship their own grain to be sold on commission if they wished. But a few years ago there were practically no loading platforms, and it was a mighty hard job to shovel grain out of a wagon up into a box car. It took a long time to fill a thousand-bushel car, when sixty to eighty bushels of wheat makes enough for a pair of horses to handle. When a farmer was eight or ten miles or more from the railway he couldn't load a car in less than a week, with the best pair of horses in Canada. And when twenty-four hours passed the farmer was charged demurrage. though the railways paid no penalty for not having the car on hand when the farmer wanted it. Under such circumstances the farmer was mightily tempted to put his grain through one of the elevators at his local town.

All the elevators in the West, though owned privately (except a number in Manitoba acquired by the Government during the past summer), are operated under the Manitoba Grain Act and are public storehouses. Any farmer may store his grain in them at a fixed charge of one and three-quarter cents a bushel a month for the first month and one cent for each succeeding month. But the owners of the elevators also buy grain, as there is more profit in that end of the business. When putting his grain into a country elevator the farmer simply drives his team in and pulls out the tail board of his wagon; the rear end is lowered, and the grain runs out into a tank beneath the floor, and the farmer drives out. The grain is then elevated, i.e., carried to the top of the

elevator by means of a belt with something akin to buckets attached. There it is weighed and then dumped into bins. To load a car from an elevator, huge spouts are opened, and a car is filled in a very short space of time.

In the parlance of the grain trade, wheat thus hauled by the farmer to an elevator is known as "street" wheat, and wheat loaded into cars by the farmers from their own teams is called "track" wheat. The uninitiated would at once say it was the policy of wisdom to put the wheat through the elevator. But was it? There is no Government system of grading or weighing grain except when in the cars going through Winnipeg or Calgary. Out in the country elevators it is merely a matter between the elevator buyer and the farmer. The elevator man would make every effort to induce the farmer to take a lower grade than was right. For instance, if a farmer brought in a wagon-load of One Northern wheat, and the elevator man made him accept a grade of Two Northern, the elevator man made three cents a bushel right there and then. In addition, the elevator man did the weighing, and often it was fearfully and wonderfully done—so was the farmer. By having the scales "fixed" in favour of the elevator there might be another gain of from one to four bushels in a wagon-load. Further, it is always considered—or has been in the past—that the bother of putting "street" wheat through an elevator is worth considerable. This is called the "spread" between "street" and "track" wheat. Here again the farmer was squeezed for several cents a bushel—according to circumstances. These were the schemes by which the elevator men made money.

The grain growers went to Ottawa a few years ago and fought hard to have loading platforms provided level with the floor of the cars—and they were successful. The railways were compelled to provide these platforms



OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF THE GRAIN GROWERS' GRAIN COMPANY, 1910-11.
BACK ROW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT—GEO. LANGLEY, T. W. KNOWLES, N. E. BAUMANN, DAVID RAILTON,
E. A. PARTRIDGE, A. VON MEIERICK.
FRONT ROW—D. E. MILLS, JOHN KENNEDY, T. A. CREAK, R. MCKENZIE, A. W. BLACKBURN.

THE VOICE FROM THE SOIL

THE FIRST BIG MOVE IN THE WARFARE BEING WAGED BY WESTERN FARMERS AGAINST LEGISLATIVE RESTRICTIONS AND CAPITAL

BY GEORGE FISHER CHIPMAN

WHEN you want a thing well done, do it yourself" is a sentiment respectable both on account of its age and its sanity. The farmers of the Middle West have demonstrated this axiomatic truth by placing their own grain upon the markets of the world to their own great advantage.

In the first article* of this series the causes leading to the farmers' organisation were set forth, and something was shown of the results they were accomplishing. Farmers' organisations in the past have been regarded as transient manifestations, but the purpose of this article is to show that at last the element of permanency has been added in Western Canada.

In the beginning the farmers organised as a protest against unfair conditions surrounding the grain trade. All the grain of the prairie was marketed through one channel—the Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange.

* The Canadian Magazine, November, 1910.

wherever there were enough farmers to need them. The farmers also demanded and secured the right to have an equal number of cars with the elevators. The "loading platform" became very popular, and it gave the farmers relief from the elevator extortions in many cases. Farmers followed the plan of working together and having a loading "bee" and thus they could save a great deal of time. Railways are branching out continually, getting closer to the farmers, which is another improvement.

But after all, the law cannot make a man honest. The farmers found it so. This does not mean that every elevator man was a crook, but certainly if the evidence of the farmers amounts to anything a great many of them were shamefully treated by the elevator companies. In spite of all the provisions of the law the farmers were not getting their due. Some of the leading spirits of the Grain Growers' organisation, of whom E. A. Partridge, of Sinaluta, Saskatchewan, was most active, urged the farmers to form a company of their own and market their own grain. Mr. Partridge was appointed by the Grain Growers five years ago to study the market conditions at the Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange and to report. He did so and advised forming a company of farmers. In the fall of 1906 the Grain Growers' Grain Company was launched at a meeting of a few men at Sinaluta, with Mr. Partridge president. It was a joint stock company with shares of \$25 each to be held only by farmers, their wives or sons, and the number of shares which any man might hold was limited to four. One man, one vote was the principle adopted, and no share could be sold or transferred without the sanction of the shareholders in their annual meeting. This provision prevented speculators ever controlling the stock or having it listed on the stock exchanges. Mr. Partridge, as representative of the company, purchased

a seat on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, which is the only wheat market in Western Canada, and the little group of farmers comprising the company asked the growers to send them their grain which they would market for one cent a bushel. The spirit of a square deal appealed to the farmers and they began to send along their grain.

It takes an immense amount of money to move the wheat crop of the West, because every farmer wants and gets three-quarters of the value of his wheat as soon as it reaches Winnipeg, which is often months before it reaches the consuming market. The Grain Growers' Grain Company made arrangements with one of the big chartered banks to finance them. Everything was going swimmingly. It began to look as if the way of relief for the farmers had at last been found.

But the elevator companies had no notion of sitting idly by and watching their profitable business being taken out of their hands. They looked into the future, saw their profits fading away and determined to put a stop to it. How could they do it? Practically, no person, not a member of the Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange could handle grain because all the dealers were members and were forbidden to deal with outsiders. The scheme then was to get the farmers company ousted from the Exchange. Soon a pretext was found.

The farmers' company had a resolution on their books stating that they intended to distribute their profits cooperatively, that is, after a reasonable interest was paid upon capital stock the balance of the profits would be distributed *pro rata* with the number of cars shipped. The farmer who shipped four cars to the company would receive four times the profit of the man who shipped but one car. The Council of the Exchange sent for Mr. Partridge and told him that such a proposition was contrary to the laws

of the Exchange and must be abandoned. The president was not inclined to yield and the company was at once suspended from membership. The fat was in the fire. The Grain Growers' Grain Company was very nearly snuffed out in the fall of 1906, and if it had been the cause of the farmers in Western Canada would have been set back for twenty years. But not so.

The few farmers at the head of the company, E. A. Partridge, John Kenney and John Spencer, by pledging their own personal property, secured sufficient credit at the bank to finance what little grain they had on hand, and one of the members of the Exchange violated the rules of that body and bought the grain at a reduced rate. So far so good. But what about the future?

The Grain Growers' Associations have no connection whatever with the Grain Growers' Grain Company, but the members of the Associations were in sympathy with the company, which was composed from among their own members and was working generally to help the members of the association and every other farmer. Therefore the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association took up the fight for the Grain Growers' Grain Company. The Association comprised at that time over five thousand good able-bodied voters in Manitoba, and they approached the Government to see if justice could not be done. The Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange was chartered by the Manitoba Legislature. The Government looked into the case and ordered the Exchange to reinstate the Grain Company. The Exchange refused and looked wise. The Association put on the pressure, and the Government issued another order and told the Exchange that unless they took back the Grain Company a special session of the Legislature would be called and the charter of the Exchange would be cancelled. The

heavy-weights in the Exchange beseeched the Government, but all to no avail, and the Grain Company, after being fastened out in the cold for seven months, was taken back into the Exchange. As Mr. Partridge aptly said, "Those fellows have been eating partridge for a long time, and now they will eat crow."

Despite all the trouble, when the Grain Growers' Grain Company held their annual meeting in July, 1907, they were able to announce that they had marketed 2,500,000 bushels of grain, had a profit of \$700,54, and had sold 1,853 shares of stock to farmers.

Before beginning another year's business, the company must have credit, and it could not be secured longer from the original bank that financed them. The Home Bank of Canada had just moved into the West. The Grain Company arranged with this bank to secure a good line of credit, and in return took a slice of bank stock and the sole agency for that stock in the West. They sold the stock to farmers, and to-day the company holds a large block of bank stock and farmers throughout the West hold additional stock in the same bank, which they are rapidly increasing. Two directors of the company are now directors of the bank. Thus the company and the bank both profited.

At the end of the first year's business Mr. Partridge retired from the presidency, and T. A. Crerar became President of the company. He still holds the position. With the Exchange in line and the banking facilities arranged the Grain Company began their second year's business in the summer of 1907. They had plenty of opposition, but the farmers in the country knew a good thing when they saw it, and the end of the business year, in the summer of 1908, saw 5,000,000 bushels of grain go through the hands of the company, and a profit of \$80,190.24 was declared. By this time there had been 2,932 shares sold.

In the meantime the Legislature of Manitoba met during the winter of 1906-07, and the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association went before the Legislature, demanding that the charter of the Exchange be amended most radically so that farmers would have a chance to see that their grain was handled fairly. The Legislature whitened the charter all to pieces, but the Exchange dropped the remodelled charter and have since carried on their business as a voluntary Association, known as the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, beyond the pale of the Legislature. But the Exchange has not bothered the Grain Company any further. Various attempts were made by speculators to smash this farmers' company on the exchange. It was always uncertain how much grain the Grain Company had on hand, and this made it a risky business for the "bulls" and "bears," who had no desire to have a million bushels dumped on them when they had forced up the price. However, the Grain Company kept strictly to the commission end of the business and avoided the speculative part, so that they could not be caught "short" and beaten.

The fall of 1903 rolled past, and the grain kept pouring into the hands of the company. The end of the third year, in the summer of 1909, showed that the Grain Company had marketed 7,500,000 bushels of grain, and declared a profit of \$53,902.08. By this time there had been 7,558 shares of stock sold to farmers.

It might be well to explain here that all prices on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange are based upon grain that is in storage in the terminal elevators in Port William or Port Arthur. When a farmer ships a car of grain to the Company he gets a receipt from the railway agent from the point of shipment. He sends this receipt to the Company. The car then passes through Winnipeg and is there inspected and graded by Dominion Government inspectors. This certificate of grade and dockage

(amount of dirt or weed seeds) is sent to the Company. Then the car passes on to the terminal elevators, where it is weighed by Government weigh-masters and dumped into the elevators. The certificate of weight is also sent to the company. Then, when the three papers are put together, the company may sell the grain. No grain dealer ever sees the grain he handles.

In the terminal elevators the elevator companies which operate them have a system by which they can still further manipulate the grain to their immense profit. Grain can be mixed in the terminal elevators so that a little high-grade wheat mixed with a lot of low-grade will raise the whole to high-grade and thus advance the price several cents a bushel. This is strictly against the law, and the Dominion Government have seventy inspectors and other employees watching the terminal elevators and checking their business to prevent such practices. But an army of inspectors could not stop it. Last spring the inspectors weighed all the grain in the elevators and discovered that the companies had been manipulating the wheat so that they had made about \$40,000 in three months. There is good reason to believe that the elevator companies have made millions of dollars by this means in years past. This time they were caught and fined \$5,500. Of course, all this plunder comes out of the pockets of the farmer and gives the Canadian wheat a black eye on the Liverpool market, which is the world's ruling wheat market.

In the fall of 1909 the Grain Growers' Grain Company went into the business by advertising largely for grain and carrying on a publicity campaign. A rule of the Grain Exchange compelled all members to charge a cent a bushel commission upon all grain handled by them. The elevator companies thought they saw in this an opportunity to smash the Grain

Company. The Exchange in the summer of 1909 dropped the "commission rule," which gave all members of the Exchange permission to charge any commission they liked. The big companies dropped their charges to half a cent and some even handled the farmers' grain for nothing, trusting to make their profits through manipulation. Things looked shady for the Grain Company again. But the leaders had faith in the loyalty of the farmers and they appealed to their shareholders. The reply was quick and sane. "Keep the commission up to one cent on wheat," was the verdict of the referendum by the shareholders. The farmers could not be bought away from their own company, and the summer of 1910, when the annual meeting of the company was held, showed a triumph. The Grain Company had handled 16,000,000 bushels of grain and had become the biggest grain commission concern in Canada.

At last the farmers were on top of the grain trade. They declared a profit of \$95,662.78, but this was not all paid out in dividends. The shareholders decided that it would be better to create a reserve fund, and thus strengthen their company. They had a paid-up capital at this time of \$292,957.55, and on this they declared a dividend of 15 per cent. They also set aside \$25,000 for an educational fund and placed the balance in reserve. The educational fund was devoted to grants to the Grain Growers' Associations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and also to the support of the official organ of these Associations.

Recently there has been a move towards shipping Alberta grain west-erly, and the Grain Company in order to handle this trade, opened an office at Calgary, where that business is cared for. Another provision which the Company made last year to protect the farmers was to check the Government system of sampling

the grain. This is done in the United States by the Grain Exchanges, but not so in Canada. The company secured permission from the Chief Grain Inspector to take a sample from the cars of grain consigned to the company. They placed an expert in charge of their sampling bureau and thus had an effectual check upon the work of the Government inspectors. This was not because of dishonesty on the part of the Government officials, but simply to correct errors. When upwards of 100,000 cars of grain are being sampled in a year mistakes are bound to happen. By means of the duplicate sampling system the company occasionally saved from \$30 to \$50 to a farmer upon his car of wheat. Naturally the farmers were glad to see this done and no other company had ever attempted it. Another protection afforded by the company was their Claims Department, by which the interests of the shippers were protected against the railway companies. When a farmer is alone against a railway company he is about the most forlorn object imaginable, but when he is backed up by a powerful company he is likely to secure a fuller measure of justice.

This in brief is the substance of the history of the greatest farmers' company on this continent. The Grain Growers' Grain Company last year did over \$20,000,000 worth of business. They have demonstrated that farmers are fully capable of conducting their own affairs. They have been compelled to fight their way against the allied forces of the big pioneer grain companies with millions of dollars at their backs and have won out against all odds. The spread between "street" and "track" wheat has been greatly reduced, and to-day farmers are getting a better price for their wheat than ever before. The company are now branching out into other lines of activity. They have determined to acquire storage

elevators and provide reliable seed grain to the western farmers. It is largely through bad seed that the farms of the West are to-day covered in many cases with all sorts of noxious weeds.

The originators of the company had no intention of making it merely a profit-producing scheme. It was intended to improve conditions not only in the grain trade but economic conditions in general in order that the agriculture might be raised to its proper level and that farmers might live more wholesome and happier lives. To this end it was intended to conduct the business upon co-operative principles. This intention is still in view. The company are now doing business in almost every province of Canada and are also exporting largely to the old country. They now operate under a provincial charter, but this winter a Federal charter will be secured from the Dominion Parliament; it will give them wider powers. The Manitoba elevators are now being taken over by the Government, and a similar action is expected in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Sir Wilfrid

Laurier has promised that the graft in the terminal elevators shall be stopped. All this will break the power of the elevator companies and will place the Grain Company more strongly than ever in control of the grain trade. Then through the introduction of the co-operative principle and the handling of all kinds of farm produce the company will be performing a valuable function. A part of the profits will be devoted to educational work each year, and farmers will be educated to the value of protecting their own interests against the encroachments of monopoly. It is not a mere dream to see the day when the Farmers will own their own mills and grind the wheat which they are now growing and placing on the market. The milling industry is a very profitable one, and the Western farmers pay more for the flour ground from their own wheat in their own province than do the people of England for the same flour made in the same place. This doesn't look good, but it is true. The farmers have accomplished much, but their work is not nearly done.

Editor's Note.—This is the second of a series of articles by Mr. Chipman describing the organisation of Western Canadian Farmers. The first appeared in the November Number. The third will be in the February Number.

THE VOICE FROM THE SOIL

ORGANISATION, EDUCATION, CO-OPERATION

BY GEORGE FISHER CHIPMAN

A FEW weeks ago the world rubbed its eyes in amazement at the spectacle of eight hundred farmers from all over Canada appearing before Parliament at Ottawa and demanding justice. What was even more significant, those farmers represented immediately an organisation of almost forty thousand farmers of Canada and indirectly four million souls who subsist through agricultural industry. No spirit of undue humility marked the presentation of their case to Parliament. Full and intelligent realisation of their importance as the groundwork of the national fabric was a feature of "Farmers' Day" on Parliament Hill.

That the representatives of organised agricultural industry in Canada should find necessary the expenditure of time, money and effort sufficient to lay their case before Parliament is a striking commentary on the Canadian system of Government. It was a public manifestation of the widespread feeling among the great wealth-producing class that so-called democracy in Canada is largely a myth, that special privilege is in control, that representative Government is broken down, and that only through a united and determined effort on the part of the common people will they secure protection of their interests. Those farmers were erstwhile followers of two historic political parties, but now they acknowledge no party ties.

The appearance of the farmers at

purely local, such as purchasing supplies, marketing produce, municipal laws, and other subjects of paramount interest to the immediate community. In addition provincial matter relating to government ownership of elevators, direct legislation, co-operation, meat packing plants, mortgage laws, taxation of land values, supplying seed grain and scores of others receive attention. Probably greater interest is taken in such national questions as the tariff, public ownership of public utilities, government ownership and operation of the Hudson's Bay Railway, railway legislation, the banking system of Canada, and the conservation of natural resources. These local meetings are proving of untold benefit for educational purposes and are rapidly bringing about a healthy interest in all public questions. Each year there is an annual convention held in each province where from five to six hundred delegates from the local associations assemble to legislate for the provincial organisations. Farmers' parliaments will meet this winter at Brandon, Regina, and Calgary.

It is at these parliaments that the policy of the associations is laid down and plans outlined for future progress. These parliaments are becoming recognised as factors of great importance in Western civilisation, and they receive due attention by the press. It is at these meetings that the tariff, elevator, and Hudson Bay Railway policies are formulated and written down.

The local associations in the three provinces are bound together by central organisations, which form the connecting link and unite the three provinces for one purpose. In Winnipeg is the central office of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association, presided over by R. McKenzie, Secretary, an Ontario man of Scotch descent, who has spent more than a quarter of a century in Manitoba, and who is familiar with the problems of Western

farmers. Moose Jaw is the headquarters of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, where F. W. Green, Secretary, is in charge. He is a native of the Mother Country, but he has spent nearly a generation in Canada, and has become one of the big farmers of Saskatchewan. In Alberta the central office of the secretary is at Innisfail. It is presided over by E. J. Fream, another native of England, whom nineteen years in Canada has transformed into a thorough Canadian. Every member of local associations pays one dollar a year, half of which goes to the support of the central office. The Grain Growers' Grain Company, realising the fact that the associations have built up the company, support the central offices by generous grants of money. Saskatchewan and Alberta associations receive small grants from the provincial governments, but such grants in no way affect their independence. The farmers' organisations of Western Canada have no political nor governmental strings upon them—and therein lies their strength. The function of the central offices is to supply information for the guidance of the locals and for discussion at their meetings; to conduct the organisation work throughout their respective provinces, and to watch the interests of the organised farmers upon all occasions. During the winter months organisers are sent throughout the country by the central office, and addresses are delivered on topics in which the farmers are interested. Each central office is an information bureau for the local associations, and it also furnishes inspiration and incentive for greater activity where needed. The central association has regularly elected presidents, and other officers and a board of directors for the conduct of its business. The Saskatchewan association has inaugurated a life membership scheme at twelve dollars a year, and the funds are lent on farm mortgages

to supply a permanent fund from the interest for the support of the central office. The Manitoba and Alberta associations are also working towards the same end. It is the aim in all the provinces to have a more highly organized central office through which the work of the organisations will receive greater impetus. It is no temporary scheme upon which the Western farmers have embarked, but one which they hope to leave in a state of great efficiency for the benefit of their descendants.

Despite the rapid progress that had been made towards the ideals set by the farmers' organisations in the Western Provinces, it was felt by the promoters that a central bond of union was needed in the shape of an independent journal which could be used as the official organ. Two years ago the Grain Growers' Grain Company, which was the only farmers' organization with a financial standing, offered to finance such a paper for the associations, and *The Grain Grower's Guide* is the result. It was started as a monthly in June, 1908, and was adopted by the three provincial associations as their official organ. So well was it received that a year later it became a weekly paper. It is the only paper in Canada, owned, controlled and edited by farmers for farmers. It is not a purely agricultural journal, but, as set out by the promoters, it is "Designed to give uncoloured news from the world of thought and action, and honest opinions thereon, with the object of aiding our people to form correct views upon economic, social and moral questions, so that the growth of society may continually be in the direction of more equitable, kinder and wiser relations between its members, resulting in the widest possible increase and diffusion of material prosperity, intellectual growth, right living, health and happiness." No member of any of the associations is compelled to subscribe to or read it.

The spirit of co-operation is permeating the prairie country very rapidly. The farmers needed only an object lesson on the value of working together, and they have had it. The agitation demanding general co-operative legislation from the Federal Parliament has behind it a widespread desire upon the part of the Western farmers to conduct their own business. They know that the present institutions are not right. There is too much duplication, too much profit taken in the wrong direction, and too lax a system of business among the farming people. The farmers are now very strongly considering the advisability of entering into all commercial lines where they will buy their produce and distribute the profits co-operatively amongst themselves.

The credit system is the curse of the West as of all other countries where it prevails. The farmer raises his wheat and sells it for cash always, and then carries on a credit system with the local merchant, which is poor business for both. The co-operative stores which the farmers will operate will be conducted upon a cash basis. If the farmer has not sold his wheat, he will be financed through the bank, and in this way be able to meet all his obligations. By having no bad debts, the stores will be able to give much better prices and also be able to buy with cash. Already there are co-operative institutions among the farmers at Red Deer, Alberta; Sinteluta, Saskatchewan, and in several other places in the Western Provinces. The Sinteluta scheme has been in operation for only a few weeks, but it is apparently a great success. The local stores in the town are being bought out by the farmers and consumers, so that there will be no duplication of business, and the best service will be secured at the lowest possible cost. The present co-operative scheme will widen out till it embraces every portion of the West.

It is not peering too far into the future to see co-operative stores in the various country towns. The farmers will own stock in them and after a fixed rate of interest is paid the balance of the profits will be given back to the patrons in proportion to the amount of business they have done at the store. This is the basis upon which the vast co-operative business of England and Scotland has been worked up so that it now amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars worth every year. The co-operative scheme is but another move towards the establishment of right relations between man and man. It tends to break down the lines of suspicion and distrust and bring the co-operators closer together and to a better understanding of each other. It promises the difference between the producer and the consumer and applies the profits from commercial transactions where they are justly due. Such a system is something that will grow in favour as its principles become better understood.

A feeling is becoming current that something should be done to remove the injustice under which the farmers of the West labour on account of the tremendous areas of vacant land that are held out of use by speculators. This land lies along the railroads by the tens of miles, while behind it and farther away are the farmers working for a living. While they work they enhance the price of the vacant land between their farms and the railroad, and yet the farmers get not a single cent from the "unearned increment" of the vacant land. There is a strong feeling that some of the principles of the Lloyd-George budget should be put into effect upon the Western prairies; the vacant land would then be put into use. It would pay to have land worked, whereas now it pays to keep it idle.

The farmers are day by day getting clearer in their minds what they need,

and what Canada needs, in the way of reform. How are they going to get it? That is really the great problem. It is one thing to know what is needed, but it is a greater thing to know how to get it. Both the present political parties in Canada are hopeless as at present constituted. True, the people of Canada are divided among the two great classes, and they vote for one or the other. They did the same in the United States, but times are changing over there now. The people are fast awakening. The same move is afoot in Canada. The new order of things is approaching rapidly. Down in the States they are smashing the power of the political bosses and bidding fair to restore the power of the common people. The formation of a third party is a hazardous undertaking and one which is very liable to defeat the purpose for which it was undertaken. The logical method to be pursued then is for the people to adhere to the respective names which once designated parties and take charge of the party caucuses and see that the men nominated for Parliament are men who will support the demands of the people. This is the probable move that will be made during the next year. There is a strong probability that there will be a Federal election before the end of 1911. Of course, it is not due for another year, but circumstances demand peculiar actions at times. If it comes, the West will be deprived of twenty new members on account of increased population. If the people who want things different get the proper candidates into the field they will have the battle half won at the start. Already this movement is under way on the prairie. If it results in placing even ten stalwart champions of the people into the Federal Parliament they can leave the whole. They will be able to force the tariff down to a "revenue" basis, that is, where the revenue will be for the

Government and not for the manufacturers; they will be able to force the hands of Parliament for government ownership of public utilities and for legislation that will give a square deal to every man. The Western farmers want "special privileges" to be prevented from robbing, and they are not asking power to rob anybody else.

The organisation, education and co-operation that is being spread over the prairies day by day is making its mark upon the national life of Canada. The West is already a strong factor at

Ottawa, and every five years it will be stronger. If the West is made to suffer to-day at the hands of more powerful and more grasping sections of the Dominion then the West will not be to blame if the spirit of retaliation manifests itself in the day to come when the balance of power is not so much towards the Atlantic. "Live and let live" is something that appeals to the Westerner, and he wants to be allowed to live just now. In fact, he has almost a determination that he will live—even though there are elements that point otherwise.